



A New National Conversation on Poverty & Economic Security

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Residents of our country are facing new challenges as they work to get out of poverty and reach economic security. Too many people are unemployed, underemployed or working several jobs to make ends meet. Americans feel less economically secure and are concerned about opportunities for their children. Community leaders are finding it more and more difficult to attract and retain quality employers, to insure the safety and security of residents, and replace aging infrastructure. States struggle to balance their budgets in the face of rapidly rising health costs. Through the New Deal, the War on Poverty, the Reagan Revolution, and program innovations over the past twenty years we are learning how to build strong communities -- but we have not learned how to bring these ideas to a national scale. It is time to bring together the people who are working toward broad-based prosperity and craft a collaborative approach to ending poverty and building economic security.

The New National Conversation on Poverty and Economic Security will engage the Community Action Network and faith-based organizations, foundations and businesses to develop and implement a National Agreement on how to build an economy that works for all and create a minimum quality of life for every citizen.

The purpose of the this multi-year initiative is to achieve broad consensus about the contemporary nature of economic insecurity, the policy or structural changes needed to create an economy that works for all, and the strategies that will most effectively achieve those changes. The process is intended to:

- Build a national commitment to ending poverty
- Evoke and adopt a shared vocabulary that reflects conditions in which 21st century low-wage workers, retirees and families struggle for independence and security
- Unite new partners and forge new alliances across sectors
- Identify each sector's most successful approaches in recent years and expand them
- Encourage implementation of these new programs and strategies by the Community Action Network and their partners around the country

“Everywhere you turn you’ll find people who believe they have been written out of the story. Everywhere you turn there’s a sense of insecurity grounded in a gnawing fear that freedom in America has come to mean the freedom of the rich to get richer even as millions of Americans are dumped from the Dream. So let me say what I think up front: The leaders and thinkers who honestly tell that story and speak passionately of the moral and religious values it puts in play will be the first political generation since the New Deal to win power back for the people”. — Bill Moyers

HOW IT WILL WORK

The Conversation will be a sequence of discussions and planning sessions among potential partners from the private sector, the non-profit and community development community, the public sector and recognized national experts on the causes of and remedies for persistent poverty and economic insecurity. Every step of the Conversation will be designed to lead to implementation and action.

These discussions have begun at the community and state level with a series of Local and State Meetings hosted by Community Action Agencies and will then move to the national level. The highlights of these local and state meetings will be part of the Marketplace of Ideas to be shared at the National Symposium on Poverty and Economic Security to be held in May 29-31, 2007 in Bethesda, MD. The Symposium will open windows on innovative approaches, strategies and solutions that foundations, non-profits, faith-based, and the business community are exploring. The Symposium will bring together diverse coalitions as well as members of the Community Action Network, including low-income community residents.

After participating in this Marketplace of Ideas, attendees will draft the community action recommendations about the goals and strategies that might be part of a New National Agreement on how to build an economy that works for all. These draft goals and strategies will be further refined at local and state meetings across the country, and at the Community Action Partnership's Annual Convention in August of 2007. At the end of this process, the vast majority of Community Action agencies will be participating in a New Conversation that cuts across lines of political party, economic status, and other affiliations. And they will be using what they are learning to improve the programs that help change people's lives.

While the Community Action Network works on their goals and strategies, other sectors will be moving forward as well. The Advisory Committee for this initiative will identify the groups and organizational representatives that will participate. These other networks will also be asked to draft their proposals for goals, measures and strategies. The Advisory Committee will also develop the agenda for a National Summit in 2008 or 2009 where the New National Agreement - consisting of national goals, accountability measures and strategies - will be developed and finalized. In order to track progress toward the goals and to keep the nation's eyes on the importance of building broad-based prosperity, follow-up meetings will be held annually.

TIMEFRAME

The time frame of this initiative will make it possible to build on current partnerships and expand these so that there is representation from many sectors in the planning and the resulting agreements that come out of the National Summit in May 2008 or 2009. We will take the time to engage multiple sectors in meaningful ways. Each sector will be asking the same set of questions around what they have found to be successful and what commitments they can make as we move forward. When we gather at national meetings we will build the national agreement based on knowledge gathered at the local and state levels. Then this knowledge gained at the national level will inform program design and implementation and stimulate partnerships at the local and state levels.

SEPTEMBER 2006 TO MARCH 2007	First round of Local and State Meetings hosted by CAAs to discuss the causes and conditions of poverty, explore successful strategies and define action steps to build economic security in the community
MAY 29-31, 2007	National Symposium on Poverty and Economic Security to review strategies that will enhance economic security in the 21 st century, to expand the new national conversation with and among members of the Advisory committee, to explore potential partnerships, and to do the first draft the community action network's version of national goals, accountability measures and suggested strategies
June 2007 and beyond	Community Action agencies and their partners begin to implement

	new programs and strategies around the country
SEPTEMBER 2007 TO MARCH 2008	CAAs and other sectors and organizations draft their suggested goals, accountability measures and strategies in preparation for the National Summit, and define their desired roles
MAY 2008 OR 2009	National Summit to create a New National Agreement
MAY 2009 AND BEYOND	Annual Reviews to track progress and impact, to update the National Agreement, and to improve strategies

Details of each stage of this initiative may be found in Appendix A.

THE ROLE OF THE COMMUNITY ACTION NETWORK

There are close to 1,100 Community Action Agencies (CAAs) working with low-income communities across the country. Most of them are innovative, adaptive organizations that have been creating and implementing new programs to address the changing conditions of poverty in America over the past 40 years. These CAAs are ready to test new solutions and re-invent the application of enduring approaches. They hope for closer ties to the analysts who identify significant trends and to the creators of new approaches so as to respond more appropriately to changing national conditions and to test better and different ideas in the field. Working collaboratively with other sectors, they will take the goals and suggested strategies in the National Agreement and work toward measurable outcomes.

The Network is providing staff support and two-thirds of the funding for the initiative. The remaining funds will be raised from foundations, businesses and individuals.

Our country is ready for new solutions. Divisions at every level have lessened our confidence in our country's ability to be a place where broad-based economic security is more than a dream. This New Conversation will begin to reach across the divides and create answers that will be a strong foundation on which to build consensus and collaboration.

NATIONAL MEDIA PLAN

Success for this initiative includes national interest and commitment to addressing poverty in America. This goal cannot be reached without a carefully crafted marketing and media plan. This plan will identify the media that should be targeted, craft the message in a way that has appeal to a wide audience, and implement a consistent effort to garner media coverage from the National Symposium through the annual progress reviews.

INITIATIVE DIRECTION, MANAGEMENT AND STAFF

This Initiative was conceptualized and is currently being guided by a Steering Committee that consists of representatives from Community Action Partnership, National Association of State Community Services Programs, CAPLAW and NCAF. These are the four national organizations serving the Community Action Network. The Steering Committee recognized the need for a broader-based planning committee and formed the Advisory Committee. As of December 2006, representation on the committee includes faith-based organizations, researchers, public policy institutes, foundations, and associations of non-profits. Representation from the business sector is being expanded now. Working Groups, including representatives from the Network, research institutions and universities will review published studies and websites and develop reports and workshops on the conditions and causes of poverty as well as recommendations solutions for the 21st Century. *Membership rosters for the Steering Committee and the Advisory Committee may be found in Appendix B.*

The roles of the Steering Committee are to:

- Approve all materials and agendas

- Manage the budget and raise funds
- Keep the overall project on track

The roles of the Advisory Committee are to:

- Recommend the sectors that should be part of the planning and the national meetings
- Recommend additional Advisory Committee members and topics and speakers for the National Symposium and Summit
- Assist in raising funds
- All members will be asked to become Sponsors and
 - Provide financial support to the initiative
 - Promote the events within their networks
 - Invite colleagues to be speakers and participants at the National Symposium and National Summit
 - Support the marketing and media efforts

The Steering Committee has identified two lead consultants and a marketing firm to keep each stage of this initiative moving forward. Staff from the Community Action Partnership and National Association of State Community Services Programs is also devoting time to tasks related to this initiative. *Resumes for the consultants and marketing firm are in Appendix B.*

INITIATIVE BUDGET

The total cost of this multi-year initiative is approximately \$ 1,027,000. This includes costs for 2 national meetings, 55 local and state meetings, coordination and communication among the Steering Committee, the Advisory Committee, 1100 community action agencies, and 50 state associations, and a national media campaign. This coordination and communication is the means by which new ideas will reach the Community Action agencies and their partners who will implement these new strategies and programs on a wider scale. Communication will also allow for ongoing learning about what strategies are most effective and provide a means by which American residents can see progress toward the goals of economic security and the elimination of poverty.

The Community Action Network has committed \$387,000 to begin the project, hold the initial planning meetings, and host local and state meetings. Earned income from registration fees for the national meetings is \$280,000. The balance of the budget, approximately \$360,000, will be raised from foundations, business sponsors, and individual contributors. The Steering Committee is beginning to contact possible funders and will continue to pursue leads provided by the Advisory Committee.

APPENDIX A

Details on each stage of the initiative

1. First round of Local/state meetings (September 2006 to March 2007)

- Purpose of these meetings
 - To discuss conditions and causes of poverty in the local region based on materials from state profiles on poverty, agency needs assessments and local universities
 - To explore programs, strategies, and initiatives that have been successful in reducing poverty
 - To agree on action steps to reduce and eliminate poverty on which the Community Action Network and other stakeholders will work collaboratively
- Attendees
 - Representation of every sector of the community including the Community Action Network including board, advisory councils, staff, and persons served by the agencies
- Outcomes
 - Meetings to include broad representation in the community and hosted by local community action agencies and state associations to discuss poverty and the steps to be taken to reduce poverty and build economic security.
 - Examples of the most effective programming run by community action and its partners
 - Registration for the National Symposium that includes community action agency staff, board members and low income community members

2. National engagement across sectors in the planning process through an Advisory Committee (November 2006 to May 2008).

- Participants include nationally recognized experts on poverty issues and representatives from business, churches and faith-based social service agencies, other social service agencies, and funding sources
- Outcomes
 - Models of successful programming from foundations, nonprofits, and faith-based organizations
 - Examples of socially responsible practices conducted by American businesses
 - Expansion to include all sectors, especially expanded representation from faith-based organizations and business

3. National Symposium on Poverty and Economic Security (May 29-31, 2007)

- Preparation for the Symposium:
 - Community views on poverty and local solutions
 - National profile on poverty
 - Continuum of definitions on poverty and economic security
 - Myths and truths about poverty
 - Guidelines on how to critique strategies and program effectiveness

- Purposes
 - Begin a national conversation that explores the pilots, R&D projects, strategies and programs conducted by research institutions, faith-based organizations, businesses and community action agencies that are showing success in reducing and eliminating poverty.
 - Continue to build bridges across sectors and networks in preparation for the National Summit
 - Enable people involved in the new conversation to get to know each other better.
 - Working together, the Advisory Committee and the Community Action Network will explore strategies and accountability measures that will work for the 21st Century.
- Attendees
 - Community Action Network including board, advisory councils, staff, and persons served by the agencies
 - Business people
 - Researchers on poverty issues
 - Churches and faith-based social service agencies
 - Other social service agencies
 - Funding sources
- Symposium Outcomes
 - Increased understanding about poverty and economic security and how they can be addressed in the 21st Century
 - Tested programs and strategies for community action agencies to adapt and adopt
 - New goals, new strategies and new progress measures
 - The draft of the community action input into the Summit
 - Wider recognition of Community Action as a successful approach to reducing and eliminating poverty

PRELIMINARY NATIONAL SYMPOSIUM AGENDA

Tuesday, May 29, 2007 3:00 – 6:00

Opening plenary: The five major theories of poverty (groups the 100+ theories into 5 major types.)
Discussion and debate; which theory underlies or drives each current anti-poverty strategy and program?

7 types of human and community capital and how to use this framework in your community to 'spiral up.'

Discussion about which of these types has the most promise for your community?

Overview of the many initiatives on poverty now underway in the U.S.

Reception

Wednesday, May 30, 2007 9:00 to 5:00

Marketplace of ideas: successful models and strategies from Advisory Committee members and others selected using the following criteria:

- Addresses the realities and conditions of the 21st Century
- Has documented results
- Encourages community engagement
- Is implemented through collaboration and partnerships
- Works with many different types of communities
- Has reasonable start-up costs (costs are in line with potential impact)
- Can show a path for expansion and replication
- Can be presented effectively so that people can take it home and start using it immediately
- Opening windows on new approaches from the Aspen Institute, Corporation for Enterprise Development, Mott Foundation, NCRCD, Casey Foundation, Northwest Area Foundation, Ford Foundation, National Council of Churches, Sargent Shriver Center on Poverty Law, Economic Policy Institute, Catholic Charities, Center for American Progress, American Public Human Services Association, and many others.
- Local Community Action solutions identified through the Local and State meetings (paper in packet and plenary panel).
- Innovative solutions from the private sector/business – what is happening at VISA, COSTCO, Valero, Entergy, CitiBank, Google, and others.
- Case studies on the processes used for reaching agreement and creating state and national goals. Examples of successful efforts include Connecticut, Minnesota, Oregon, California, United Nations Development Program, Ireland, and England.

Thursday, May 31, 2007 9:00 – 1:30

Create and vote on the first draft of Community Action's goals, accountability measures and strategies that the Community Action Network will propose for the National Summit. This will include a new definition or standard of the minimum quality of life for every person and how to create it. We will identify high impact strategies to expand human capital, financial capital, social capital, and political capital. This draft will go back to the state and local levels for discussion, and be enhanced at the Community Action Partnership Conference in August, 2007, and will have additional and extensive discussion within the community action network before going to the Summit.

Closing luncheon with inspirational speaker (We are considering Donna Beagle, Dr. Amartya Sen, or Jeffery Sachs)

4. Second round of Local and state meetings (October 2007 – March 2008)

- Purpose of these meetings
 - Share the results of the Symposium with community partners
 - Share information about strategies and programs that will be successful at building economic security in the 21st Century as discussed by Advisory Committee members at the Symposium or elsewhere
 - Discuss how to adapt these strategies or R&D projects for your community; agree on action steps
 - Discuss potential affiliations or partnerships with state or local units of the Advisory Committee member's organizations
 - Build commitment toward collaborative work across sectors to reduce and eliminate poverty
 - Review and make suggestions for improvements in the draft of the community action version of desired national goals, accountability measures and strategies
 - Discuss the National Summit and suggest desired outcomes and desired participants from other sectors
- Attendees
 - Representation of every sector of the community including the Community Action Network board, staff, persons served by the agency and other stakeholders
- Outcomes
 - Adapting or adopting new strategies to enhance economic security
 - Improvement of Community Action Network's collaborative vision, goals and strategies and discussion about how to use them in the local or state setting
 - Commitment to collaborative action within the community

5. National Summit on Poverty and Economic Security (May 2008/ May 2009)

- Purpose
 - To create a new national agreement around:
 - An economy that works for all and economic security.
 - A new standard of the minimum quality of life and how to create it.
 - Roles of the market/private sector, faith-based organizations, nonprofits, government, families, and individuals. Reach agreement across this diverse spectrum on goals and roles.
 - Recognizing that mega-events such as global warming and energy shortages predicted for this century will hit the poor first and hardest.
- Attendees
 - Strong representation from the Community Action Network, businesses, faith-based organizations, non-profits, and research and public policy institutions
- Summit Outcomes:
 - Increased understanding of poverty and what America can/will do about it.
 - A New National Agreement that includes broad national goals.
 - Measures for accountability and for measuring progress toward reaching the goals, including return on investment, maximizing the potential of every person, etc.
 - Suggested strategies.
 - Expanding pool of representation from a diverse group of committed stakeholders
 - Wider recognition of Community Action as a successful approach to reducing poverty and enhancing economic security

National Summit Preparation as we see it now

1. Review approaches to creating large-scale frameworks of goals, accountability measures and strategies such as the Minnesota Milestones, Oregon Benchmarks, Connecticut Plan on Child Poverty, Irish plan on child poverty, etc.
2. Adapt or create a framework for the Summit.
3. Review process methods by which representatives from diverse sectors and networks can reach agreements, including large-scale processes as used by national organizations, international nongovernmental organizations, other countries, and Federal agencies. Adapt or create the process for the Summit.
4. Invite diverse networks and sectors to develop their own proposed goals, accountability measures and strategies as input to the National Summit.
5. Invite Advisory Committee members and other to become the sponsors and planners of the Summit.
6. Obtain financial and other forms of support.
7. Explore and develop Internet-based processes as an additional type of participation in the New Conversation.

6. Accountability and Progress Reviews as we see them now

- Purpose
 - To share what has been accomplished
 - To learn from successes and challenges
 - To keep national attention on the issue of poverty and the work being done to reduce and eliminate poverty and create economic security
- Attendees
 - People committed to the creation of a new national conversation and to collaboration as a process
 - Sectors, organizations and stakeholders who want to shape national goals and accountability measures
- Outcomes
 - Media coverage of the New National Agreement and the work completed to date
 - Refinement of the Agreement based on successes and challenge identified by implementing organizations

APPENDIX B

Includes Rosters for the Advisory Committee, the Steering Committee, and brief bios for James Masters and Mary Virtue, the lead consultants on this initiative.

Advisory Committee Members

Jeff Faux	Economic Policy Institute
Dr. William Spriggs	Howard University
Ed Lazere	DC Fiscal Policy Institute (CBPP)
Dr. Cathy Solheim	University of Minnesota
Bob Zdenek	Alliance for Healthy Homes
Kevin Kelly	Association for Enterprise Opportunity
Bob Friedman	Corporation for Enterprise Development
Rita McLennon	Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law
Pablo Eisenberg	Georgetown Public Policy Institute
Miriam Shark	Annie E. Casey Foundation.
Representative	North West Area Foundation
Jim Richardson	National Rural Funders Collaborative
Connie Greer	National Association of State Community Services Programs
Michael Jannini	Marriott International VP for Brand Marketing
Arnold Kling	Cato Institute
Prof. Judith Jones	Columbia University
Jerry Friedman	American Public Human Services Association
Sarah Greene	National Head Start Association
John Briscoe	National Council of Churches
Raul Yzaguirre	Founder, National Council of La Raza
Jodie Levin Epstein	Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)
Dr. Charles Fluharty	RUPRI, University of Missouri
Dr. Cornelia Flora	N. Central Reg Center for Rural Dev, Iowa State University
Kirsten Moy	Aspen Institute
Suzanne Siskel	Ford Foundation, Community Resource Development
Dr. Garth Mangum	University of Utah
John Hope Bryant	Operation Hope
Jack Litzenberg	Mott Foundation
William Schambra	Hudson Institute
Dr. Dorothy Height	National Council of Negro Women
Hilary Shelton	NAACP
Patricia Wilson-Coker	Former Commissioner, CT Department of Social Services
Dorothy Rosenberg	United Nations Development Program
Radhika K. Fox	PolicyLink
Bruce Lesley	First Focus/America's Promise
Rachel B. Tompkins	The Rural School and Community Trust
Joan Kuriansky	Wider Opportunities for Women